

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 20, 2019

The Honorable Elaine L. Chao
Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, D.C. 20590-0001

Dear Secretary Chao:

As the Department considers the applications for the Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) grants, we hope you will be mindful of the needs of traditionally underserved communities, particularly those in Indian Country.

We are concerned that very few of the 573 Native American tribal governments have been successful in securing BUILD grants. Many tribal governments feel that they are being left out of the BUILD grant program even though their reservations are important components to the local and regional economies and communities. In fact, in the last round of BUILD grant funding, 59 tribal nations applied, but only two received awards.

Tribal reservations often encompass tribal, interstate, state and county roads that also serve non-tribal communities. Tribal governments have expressed the need to widen highways and develop off-ramps and interchanges to better access their lands. In some instances, this lack of infrastructure is significantly hindering tribal economic development. This is the case even in places where the tribal governments have become one of the largest employers in the region, sometimes employing several thousand non-tribal citizens.

Improving access to BUILD grants will also improve safety on tribal lands for tribal members and members of the local community who access tribal infrastructure. Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of unintentional death for American Indians and Alaska Natives with fatalities more than twice that of other races for adults. The Department has correctly placed a high priority on multi-jurisdictional infrastructure needs that increase safety. Nowhere is that need greater than in Indian Country.

While tribal governments have been encouraged to increase their coordination with the local municipalities and state governments in order to submit grant applications that clearly show a regional impact with support from multiple jurisdictions, it is important for the Department to recognize the inherent challenges and limitations tribal nations have in submitting competitive applications. We hope the Department will be mindful of such applications during the selection process.

We recognize that BUILD grants generate a large number of applicants and we support your efforts to ensure the grants are awarded to diverse projects that will have significant positive impacts on local and regional economies, including those in Indian Country.

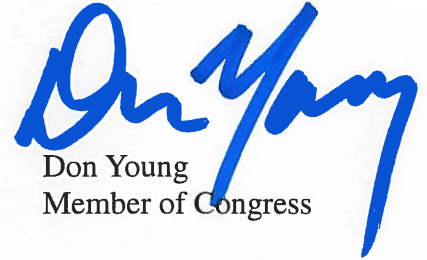
Sincerely,



Greg Stanton
Member of Congress



Sharice L. Davids
Member of Congress



Don Young
Member of Congress